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Inside Information

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of Agriculture

Office of Information

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THE CONTINUING 'PRINTING' SAGA....

Its role in the regulation of government printing, including that performed through modern technology, continues to occupy the attention of the U.S. Congress' Joint Committee on Printing.

The JCP will hold an open hearing on its proposed revised regulations on Wednesday, Aug. 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Room 325 of the Russell Building of the U.S. Senate. John McClung, director of USDA's Office of Information, urged USDA agency information directors to attend.

For those who could use a quick fill-in: Last year, the JCP, which oversees all federal government printing, revised its regulations to include all new technology in the printing environment.

Automatic data processing, insofar as it was involved in composition and printing, had escaped the committee's jurisdiction. In the proposed revisions, the JCP redefined printing to include anything that could be used to put type electronically on paper and any machine that can reproduce quantity copies.

There were other provisions, such as the creating of a "central information management organization" in each federal executive department.

USDA objected to the proposed regulations and said so. In fact, all the federal departments and independent agencies objected.

The U.S. Office of Management & Budget vigorously objected, saying that the JCP was getting too deeply into executive branch activities. The U.S. Department of Justice said the revised regulations would be unconstitutional.

Synthesizing input from its agencies, USDA said the JCP was engaging in micromanagement, that is, that it was getting too deeply into the details of management from a distance.

USDA also objected to the long reports that would be required.

In the face of all the objections, the JCP made some adjustments in its revised regulations and issued a new draft. And, the JCP renamed its "regulations" as "policies and guidelines."

McClung also noted that "while JCP will not officially approve plans in the Executive Branch, as required in the previous revision, it will express verbal opinion on the plans.

"If an agency doesn't comply with JCP's response, the Committee will use its skills in influencing the Congressional appropriation committees to take appropriate action." And now, the open meeting.

'AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK' TURNS 100

The July 1984 issue of AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK, a USDA periodical, came off the presses without fanfare, though it was numbered A0-100.

It conjured up vivid memories for Ben Blankenship, information director for USDA's Economic Management Service. He had just taken over directorship of the Economic Research Service's information staff when the first issue came out in June 1975.

Geraldine Schumacher, now chief of media and public affairs for USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, was the periodical's first managing editor.

As a matter of fact, Blankenship recalls, she determined the size and color of the new publication, which was to become one of USDA's foremost vehicles for farm income and food price figures.

AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK brings together in one place each month the substantial developments in the agricultural economy, the U.S. economy and the world economy, and how they relate to one another.

From the start, Blankenship recalls, it was a joint product of numbers and analysis people working with information people.

The first economics editor was Bob Miller, who came from the "dairy situation" report, one of five separate reports which were consolidated to form AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK.

Schumacher says she dreamed of "a circulation of a million" when it started but that she is satisfied it has survived.

Typically, 2,500 copies of the periodical are sold monthly, and another 1,000 copies distributed without charge.

USDA's Extension Service and Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service distribute another few thousand copies within their organizations.

"Its influence extends far beyond the circulation numbers," Blankenship says. "The media pick up articles from every issue. And, it is distributed electronically through Agnet."

USDA MANAGEMENT'S INFORMATION MANAGER

Susan Hess, a public affairs specialist with USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service for 13 years, has been named information officer with the newly-formed USDA Office of Management Reform.

This office, OMR, which reports to the Assistant Secretary for Administration, is the implementation group for "Reform 88," a government-wide initiative to improve management processes, develop efficient and compatible administrative systems, and improve total resource management.

Hess may be the first information officer for administrative offices in USDA.

A graduate in journalism from Ohio University, Hess was in charge of the Medfly information effort, among other assignments, at APHIS.

Hess will be communicating Reform 88 initiatives, especially among USDA agencies, through internal agency newsletters and other means.

She's been consulting with USDA's Office of Information. The OI's Photography Division has produced a slide set for her.

She sees USDA agency information shops as major conduits for management information.

INFO SUPPORT PLANNED FOR 1985 FOOD EXPO

Invitations have gone out to firms to take part in the second biennial NASDA National Food & Agriculture Exposition to be held in Kansas City, Mo., April 22-24, 1985.

Cosponsors are the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Foreign Agricultural Service is coordinating for USDA.

The exposition brings U.S. exhibitors of value-added products face to face with top buyers from all over the world.

Communication officers of state departments of agriculture have been asked to provide the necessary information support for this significant event. USDA's Office of Information and FAS' information staff also will be lending support.

For more information about the communicators' support, contact Mark Randal (COSDA president), Press Secretary, Illinois Department of Agriculture, State Fairgrounds, Springfield, IL 62706, or send message to Dialcom mailbox GFL010, or call (217) 782-2172.

Others should contact NASDA Headquarters, 1616 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, or send message to Dialcom mailbox SDA001, or call (202) 628-1566.

MARKET INFORMATION TO THE MAX

Being a professional communicator includes the ability to get everything possible out of the raw materials.

One such professional in the Radio & Television Division of USDA's Office of Information is Gary Crawford, of the radio section.

In April, Crawford went to Riverside, Calif., to cover Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block's "listening session." Crawford is still using material from that trip.

The listening session occupied only one day. Crawford also spent a half day at the USDA Forest Service Laboratory at Riverside, another half day at the University of California's Riverside Campus, and a full day at the Los Padres National Forest.

Since he is preparing a major radio documentary on acid rain, some of this time was spent gathering material for that. But he also interviewed a scientist about building drought resistance in trees using fungi, and another scientist who had interviewed 90 arsonists to probe why people set forest fires.

Crawford got five stories out of an interview with an earthquake expert, and at least two stories out of an interview with a Cooperative Extension Service consumer specialist.

He found out how Forest Service personnel were gearing up for the Olympics, probed the subject of drilling for oil on USDA's national forest land, talked to law enforcement officers about the growing of marijuana in USDA's national forests, and then asked what is being done to fight other crime in the forests.

In a half day with forest fire fighters, Crawford got enough material to do a special documentary and several short features. Then there was an interview with a fire prevention officer. Crawford notes that each interview serves multiple uses. He extracts not only 2-1/2-minute farm features, but 3-minute consumer features, 13-1/2-minute documentaries, and spot news items.

Furthermore, he says, other people in the Radio & Television Division are busier and travel more than he does. More about that later.

'INSIDE INFORMATION' READERS SURVEYED

Last week, those getting "Inside Information" via electronic mail were asked to respond to questions about the electronic edition.

This week, those getting printed copies of the "pink letter" are asked to respond to a request for different information.

USDA mailing lists must be circularized periodically to make certain those receiving information still want to. Also, in the case of some offices receiving multiple copies for distribution to individual staff members, there's a need to know how many copies.

Therefore, all printed copy subscribers are asked to:

1. Return the printed label on the envelope in which your "Inside Information" copies are delivered with any necessary address corrections.

2. Write somewhere on the same piece of paper the number of copies your office needs to distribute to each staff member (if you prefer to do that). Otherwise, your office will get only one copy after the circularization is completed.

3. If you know of any USDA, land grant university or state department of agriculture information office that is not now getting "Inside Information" but would like to, enclose the name, address and number of copies wanted.

Send to: Nancy Bevis, Special Programs Division, Office of Information, Room 536-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.

Deadline for responses is Friday, August 31.

NEW NATIONAL AG PUBLIC TV SHOW PLANNED

A new national 15-minute daily agricultural television show is being planned by the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting.

The show will be offered to user stations through the PBS satellite.

Producers of the show met recently with representatives of three units of USDA's Office of Information to solicit support.

Those meeting with the producers were: Jim Johnson, chief of the Radio & Television Division; Larry Quinn, chief of the Video & Film Division; Russell Forte, public affairs specialist with the News Division; and Don Elder, public affairs specialist with the Radio & TV Division and host of the weekly USDA television show, "A Better Way..."

COMMUNICATOR TO JOIN USDA VIDEO UNIT

Warren Phipps has been selected to fill the position of cameraman/director/editor in USDA's Video & Film Division.

Phipps, with the Naval Audiovisual Center, spent time with the White House film documentation crew during President Johnson's administration while on active duty with the U.S. Navy.

Since then he's held positions with Walter Reed Army Hospital's audiovisual center and the Navy facility.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, State Departments of Agriculture and Land Grant Universities. Any items, comments and inquiries should be addressed to either John Crowley or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or to AGR002 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

